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ABSTRACT

The New York State Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are designed to meet the demand for regional delivery of supplementary educational services and support for New York State school districts. BOCES have provided occupational education programs and special education programs for the disabled as well as other shared services. This paper discusses recent activities and future directions of BOCES. The first section describes a planning process to identify need for change in occupational education programs to reflect the transition from a manufacuring economy to one based on service and technology. The second section describes recent developments in special education, including a statewide network for providing inservice education to teachers, administrators, parents, board of education members, and support personnel. The third section describes the role of BOCES in providing inservice training in all educational areas. An action plan, designed to improve elementary and secondary educational results, calls for regional training and resource centers in each of the 43 BOCES and the 5 large cities. The fourth secion describes the 13 regional computer centers delivering management and instructional support services to the school districts in New York State. The fifth section describes regional planning and cooperation in instructional management, and the final section points out important future directions for BOCES, including proposed legislation to permit academic course offerings at regular BOCES centers. (TE)

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"The New York Experience: Phase II

1980 - To The Future"

A Presentation to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 23-27, 1984
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"The New York Experience: Phase II 1980 - To The Future"

Created by the New York State Legislature in 1948, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, known as BOCES in New York State, have emerged as the principal agency designed to meet the demand for regional delivery of educational services which supplement and support New York State school district services.

Initially, services were restricted to providing instructional and instructional support staff who provided services to one or more districts. In 1967, revisions in the law made it possible for New York State BOCES to acquire facilities and to operate regional occupational education programs and programs for pupils with handicapping conditions. Occupational education programs and programs for pupils with handicapping conditions have been the major programs provided by BOCES.

In 1972, legislation permitting another type of regional education service agency was repealed and the BOCES became the primary means for school districts to share services. Additional services have been added either by specific inclusion in the law or by use of the flexibility provided in the legal provision, "and such other services as the commissioner of education may approve." These services include, but are not restricted to, data processing, computer assisted instruction, film libraries, audio-visual equipment repair, adult continuing education, planning, staff development, curriculum development, negotiations, cooperative purchasing, and pupil transportation. For the last 4 or 5 years, the role of BOCES in providing these services has been evolving to meet the needs of a changing service population and an explosion in technology.

Occupational Education in BOCES

Since 1980, the State Education Department in conjunction with educators throughout the State, have been going through a planning process to identify need for change in occupational education programs. This process has been labelled the futuring of occupational education programs.

The futuring process is designed to reflect the changes in the nature of occupations and skills needed by employees in business and industry in the 1980's and 1990's. All occupational students will be required to develop occupational awareness, to develop skills in job readiness, and to develop life skills in addition to occupational skills preparation. The nature of occupational skills developed will reflect the transition from a manufacturing economy to one based on service and technology. To undertake this task, the Department worked with business people from all sectors of the economy to identify the skills they wanted their employees to possess within an ever increasing technological society. Educators across the State then told us how to design our syllabi and curricula to most effectively teach students these skills. The result of the futuring programs will be a well articulated, updated occupational education curricula for all students in the State.

In New York State, the BOCES is the primary service provider in occupational education for school age pupils outside the 5 large cities. Part of the futuring process has focused on whether changes should be made in the role of the BOCES, the school district and other public agencies such as community colleges providing occupational education. The expectation is that the public school, the BOCES and such agencies as community colleges will each contribute to the educational process and that clear means of articulation among agencies will be identified and implemented. The implications of the futuring process for BOCES is very significant. BOCES was initially developed and equipped to meet the needs of a manufacturing society with heavy emphasis on trade occupations. There is a need to retool the educational programs in our BOCES to provide students with the occupational skills necessary in a technological society. The State Education Department has requested funding from the State to allow BOCES and other educational agencies to purchase high cost technological

equipment designed for instructional purposes and for instructional management and support.

Another area where BOCES is changing their program service is in the area of adult occupational education. BOCES enrollments for adults exceeded school age pupils by 50 percent in 1977-78. Between 1980 and 1990 the age group 15-19 is expected to decrease by 26 percent. During the same period, the proportion of 25-49 year olds is expected to increase by 28 percent. This would seem to project a continuation of the trend toward greater involvement by BOCES in adult occupational education. In fact, the State Education Department has submitted legislation to allow BOCES to receive State aid for adult students attending the BOCES regular day programs. Our intent is to effectively use all available educational resources to meet the needs of an increasing adult population. In this way we will maintain a wide spectrum of high quality occupational education programs in the most cost effective manner.

Special Education in BOCES

The other traditional service provided by BOCES is programs for pupils with handicapping conditions. However, with more handicapped pupils being mainstreamed into less restricted environments in regular school programs, the handicapped population served by the BOCES is decreasing in size, but increasing in the severity of the handicaps of the pupils it serves. As we change the way in which we educate handicapped students, the needs for effective in-service education becomes more important. In New York State, we have a statewide network for providing in-service training in the area of special education to train teachers, administrators, parents, board of education members and support personnel. This network is called the Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) and is found in each BOCES in the State. I believe that SETRC is one of the most comprehensive approaches to

providing in-service education for special education in the nation. As we strive to improve our services to handicapped students, the role of SETRC as a regional in-service network will be vital to implementing change.

Also, in the area of special education, greater use of computer technology specifically for networking and for more cost efficient and effective operation of handicapped programs will also be necessary. Through the BOCES, handicapped pupils should also gain greater access to diploma credit programs with emphasis on a variety of academic areas and to BOCES occupational education programs. This increased service to programs and pupils will probably require greater inter- and intra-agency cooperation. There is a need to cooperate rather than compete among various educational, social services, and health agencies so we can deliver services more effectively to the handicapped. BOCES will certainly be the necessary focal point to accomplish this coordination.

In-service Education

The role of BOCES in providing in-service training will grow in all educational areas. In New York State, we have just completed an Action Plan designed to improve elementary and secondary educational results. The Action Plan raises standards for students, schools, teachers and administrators to increase educational excellence and equity within New York State. However, we recognize that raising diploma requirements, requiring tests for teachers and administrators and improving State syllabi and curricula, cannot by themselves improve the educational programs for our students. In-service education is necessary to ensure that all our teachers and administrators have the necessary training to implement new curricula and standards. Without a highly motivated and knowledgable teaching force, we cannot expect to effect meaningful change.

The Action Plan would initiate regional training and resource centers in each of the 43 BOCES and the 5 large cities. These centers would incorporate

all current training programs and be responsible for communicating with the State Education Department to assure that the various programs are not duplicative and that all training needs are met. This configuration would allow for efficient use of resources on a shared basis and also gives us the ability to focus on the distinct training needs of regular, special, and occupational educators.

The training centers would be responsible for providing training, technical assistance and information dissemination. The majority of training and technical assistance activities would be provided according to the target audiences served by each center. In addition to conducting training, the center would establish a resource file for the purpose of identifying consultants who could be employed by local districts who need information in specific areas. Training activities for each center would be in accordance with both statewide and local needs.

Many of these training activities would be provided by staff while other training activities would be provided by consultants who either possess the needed information or who would receive specific training and the responsibility of providing that training to other people using the turnkey training model. This combination of center trainers, consultants, and turnkey trainers would provide a comprehensive and effective system of training delivery throughout New York State using the BOCES as its central location. I believe that in-service training will shortly become a key function of our BOCES. The SETRC network in special education is an excellent example of how effective BOCES can be in delivering this service.

Computer Services

Presently there are 13 Regional Computer Centers delivering a variety of management and instructional support services to the school districts in New York State. These centers are primarily located in BOCES. Regional centers deliver substantial services to over 80 percent of the 730 districts

in New York. School districts share in services from the Regional Centers that include: student information, instructional management, computer based instruction, payroll, personnel and finance. The mode of service delivery covers a wide evolutionary range. Batch processing, where data and reports are transported to and from the regional center mainframe to the school district is used in all centers for some services. In addition all centers have now moved to a more heavy involvement in on-line service delivery through extensive terminal networks. Over 1,000 management terminals and over 4,000 instructional terminals are linked to the regional centers. In addition all centers are moving toward a more distributed or decentralized model of service delivery through the use of in-district mini and microcomputers.

The Department has recently required more rigorous planning in the establishment of the regional center service delivery networks. These networks consist of standardized hardware, software, data and management processes. The service delivery network standards are important from the State's perspective in remaining consistent with the BOCES shared services laws allowing aid for appropriate and approved BOCES shared services. It is the states belief that the additional advantages of the regional approach to computer services include:

- the encouragement of better management practices and more effective instruction in the schools,
- opportunity for storing common data elements and generating state and federal reports in a non-redundant, wasteful manner,
- avoidance of costly, redundant computer hardware and software systems requiring highly trained technical staff in all 730 districts,
- commonality of hardware and software across a region for cost savings and resource sharing, and

- more equitable distribution of computer technology for management and instruction.

The present regional networks are struggling to integrate and use new technologies such as relational databases, fourth generation languages, artificial intelligence techniques, satellite communications, office technology decision support systems for managers and students, authoring systems, and microcomputer capability into an integrated infrastructure for the delivery of information and instructional services for the future.

Instructional Management

Regional planning in the area of instructional management is also proving to be very effective in New York State. The value of BOCES regional cooperation is particularly evident in the New York State Comprehensive Instructional Management System (CIMS). CIMS is based on research about effective schools which states that if:

. instruction is planned and carried out systematically

. tests are planned to represent the intents of instruction

. instructional resources and strategies are systematically integrated and applied to meet student needs

. information on student progress is generated and used for student diagnosis, placement and instructional pacing

. in-service is systematically conducted based on student needs

instruction will be more effective and there will be substantial increases in student learning.

CIMS curricula are regionally developed and implemented. Presently over 215,000 students are involved with CIMS. In places where CIMS expected outcomes, tests, instructional support materials and in-service activities have been implemented, substantial increases in student learning as well as other benefits have been obtained.

One strength of the CIMS regional approach is derived from the framework it provides for integrating curriculum, assessment, instruction and in-service on a regional basis, thereby ensuring more effective use of existing instructional resources. The State legislature and the Governor are beginning to see the tremendous value in CIMS and we expect to receive the necessary fiscal resources to make CIMS available to every student and teacher in New York State.

Future Directions

Finally, I would like to comment on what I believe will be an important new direction for the BOCES in New York State, namely, the offering of credit bearing courses in academic subject areas. Traditionally, BOCES have not ventured into this area due to a rather strict interpretation of the BOCES statutes by the State and the overwhelming belief that it was the responsibility of school districts to provide academic subjects for their students. Two things are presently occurring which have caused educators in New York to begin to rethink the concept of BOCES offering academic subjects. First of all, the issue of educational equity is of increasing concern. Educators in both BOCES and its component school districts are concerned whether they have sufficient fiscal resources to offer their students a wide array of educational programs. This is especially a concern in rural schools where low enrollments very often prevent a school from offering courses which would only attract a few students and therefore would not be cost effective.

Secondly, the Action Plan, which I mentioned earlier, will raise graduation standards for all students. The practical result is that students who elect to attend BOCES for occupational education courses and who have a very long travel time between BOCES and the home school may find a shortage of time within their schedule to complete all this academic courses.

One of the ways to relieve this shortage is to allow BOCES to get more involved in offering academic courses. In fact, the Department has proposed legislation which would allow the following:

1) An expansion of itinerant teaching services into academic subjects.
2) Academic course offerings at regular BOCES Centers or at leased sites during the school year or summer schools, as requested by component districts.
3) Block scheduling at BOCES to enable students to attend classes at a BOCES Center for an entire school day.
4) Satellite program of specific concentrations or specializations sponsored by BOCES at local schools, with cross-contracting for services.
5) Expanded use of interactive and other technologies to offer academic courses on site or at component school districts.

The State Education Department is proposing that the above-mentioned options be pilot tested over a three year period. State aid would be generated using the existing formula during the pilot period, with a determination of any changes in the role of BOCES to be made only after an evaluation of the pilot programs.

In summary, it is my belief that the role of regional service agencies in New York State will undergo an important growth period over the next few years. I believe that BOCES will play a crucial role in providing academic programs in communities where individual school districts cannot afford to offer these courses, BOCES will become the focal point of providing in-service education to teachers and administrators and finally, BOCES will increase their role in offering computer services and interactive technologies to their component school districts.

A regional approval to providing educational services will continue to be an integral part of the educational delivery system in New York State.